

San Joaquin County Grand Jury



DEUEL VOCATIONAL INSTITUTION 2008/2009 San Joaquin County Grand Jury

OBSERVATIONS

Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI) is a men's prison facility operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) on about 900 acres just east of the City of Tracy, California. The facility is over 50 years old. It is severely overcrowded with approximately 4,000 inmates, more than twice the number for which it was originally designed. The 2008/2009 San Joaquin County Grand Jury toured DVI in October 2008, and the Law and Justice Committee made an additional visit in December 2008.

In October 2002, DVI's mission changed from vocational education to reception center. As a reception center, sentenced felons from the courts are medically screened and classified for placement and programming within other CDCR institutions. A small number of General Population inmates are assigned landscape maintenance, farm and dairy operations, and other Prison Industries programs. Inmates are also assigned to the kitchen and do much of the plant operations work.

The Grand Jury toured the institution's medical/infirmary area and had the opportunity to talk with on-duty medical staff. General information was shared on the healthcare services currently provided to the facility's inmates.

The CDCR is involved in Federal litigation on two major lawsuits, Coleman and Plata, involving the adequacy of mental and physical healthcare provided to the inmates. These lawsuits have been ongoing for over ten years and seven years respectively. The Court has appointed a Special Master and Receiver to take control of the CDCR's medical program. Final adjudication is pending.

FINDINGS

1. The overcrowding problem that was addressed in the 2007/2008 San Joaquin County report continues. The continued use of the gymnasium as a large, open dormitory and the use of former day rooms for inmate housing is evidence of the problem. The issue of overcrowding within the prison system is currently under review by the Federal Court as part of the Plata and Coleman litigation against the CDCR.

2. Maintenance issues, including peeling paint on the ceiling of the kitchen, were cited in the 2007/2008 San Joaquin County Grand Jury report. The kitchen has been painted. Although the problem with the ceiling paint was remedied, the overall condition of the kitchen deserves further comment. Thousands of meals are prepared daily. It is difficult to maintain a sanitary and efficient kitchen operation while dealing with an aging and worn out kitchen facility.
3. The recent implementation of the State Offender Management Systems (SOMS) centralized Inmate Trust Accounts. Inmates no longer have to wait for their trust accounts to be transferred when the inmate moves from the sending institution to the receiving institution. The implementation of the SOMS should significantly reduce the many questions to staff and inmate appeals regarding inmate trust accounts.
4. Two DVI inmate escapes within the last year can be traced directly to the failure of staff and/or inadequate release procedures. In the first case, an inmate was released on parole earlier than he should have been, due to one or more errors in calculating his release date. In the second case, two inmates who were related conspired so that one inmate could successfully represent himself as the other. This conspiracy resulted in a mistaken-identity release.
5. Although DVI has improved its procedure for reviewing files and interviewing inmates, it is impossible to ensure that available staff will be personally acquainted with inmates to the extent that every inmate's identity will be known to the releasing staff. Electronic fingerprint scan hardware and software is available for scanning state and/or local databases to positively identify inmates prior to release.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DVI develop a capital outlay budget proposal to remodel/rebuild the main kitchen.
2. DVI obtain the necessary hardware and software to do positive identification of inmates via fingerprint scan or other positive biometric identifiers when releasing inmates.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

Pursuant to Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall report to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court, in writing and within 90 days of publication of this report, with a response as follows:

As to each finding in the report a response indicating one of the following:

- a. The respondent agrees with the finding.
- b. The respondent disagrees with the finding, with an explanation of the reasons therefore.

As to each recommendation, a response indicating one of the following:

- a. The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary of the action taken.
- b. The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be with a time frame for implementation.
- c. The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation of the scope of analysis and a time frame not to exceed six (6) months.
- d. The recommendation will not be implemented, with an explanation therefore.